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1	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		
2	DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY		
3	CHAABAN, et al.,		
4	Plaintiffs,		
5	5 vs.	. Case No. 2:08-cv-01567	
6	6 CRISCITO,	. Newark, New Jersey . June 21, 2010	
7	7 Defendant.		
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9		T OF HEARING	
10	BEFORE THE HONOF	BEFORE THE HONORABLE MADELINE ARLEO UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE	
11	APPEARANCES:		
12			
13		N M. CHARME, ESQ. Stadtmauer & Michaels, P.A.	
14	4 26 Coli	umbia Turnpike n Park, NJ 07932-2246	
15	5	ICHAEL AGNELLO, ESQ.	
16	5 Carella	A, Byrne, Cecchi, Olstein, Agnello, P.C.	
17	7 5 Becke	er Farm Road ad, NJ 07068	
18	3	I. KERN, ESQ.	
19	CONROY	& SCHOPPMANN, PC DUTE 22 EAST	
20		WATER, NJ 08807	
21	Audio Operator:	Audio Operator:	
22	+	NG TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES Willowbrook Boulevard	
23	B Wa	yne, New Jersey 07470 73) 237-6080	
24	1	Proceedings recorded by electronic sound recording;	
25	transcript produced by transcription service.		

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              (Commencement of proceedings at 12:22 p.m.)
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              THE COURT: -- Criscito. Could I have appearances,
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    please?
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              MR. CHARME: Stephen Charme, Witman Stadtmauer for
 6
    the plaintiff trustees.
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              THE COURT: Okay.
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              MR. AGNELLO: John Agnello also for plaintiffs'
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    trustees.
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              THE COURT: Okay.
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              MR. KERN: Steven Kern, Kern Augustine Conroy &
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    Schoppmann on behalf of Dr. Criscito.
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              THE COURT: Okay. Have a seat, everyone.
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    just put a -- this motion in a little bit of factual context.
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              This is a motion of Dr. Criscito seeking leave to
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    file a third-party complaint pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P.
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    14(a). Plaintiffs Dr. Fadi Chaaban, Dr. Sabino Torre,
    Dr. Constantinos Costeas, and Dr. Anthony Casella are
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    trustees of Diagnostic & Clinical Cardiology, a profit
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    sharing plan, which is the subject this action.
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              The complaint as -- alleges as follows: Criscito
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    intentionally concealed his breach of fiduciary duties to the
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   plan, its beneficiaries and participants. Specifically
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   Criscito, the former trustee, secretly diverted the plan's
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   assets to his own benefit. Criscito accomplished this
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1 unlawful conduct through a series of schemes spanning decades 2 until 2007 when he was the sole trustee. Plaintiffs did not 3 discover Criscito's fraudulent scheme until they replaced him 4 as trustee in 2007. Based on this alleged wrongdoing, 5 plaintiffs filed this action in March of 2008. that Criscito violated his fiduciaries duties to the plan as 7 set forth in the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, 8 otherwise known as ERISA. And I should note for the record, 9 that there is no claim of negligence; it's an intentional 10 tort and a fraud claim brought under ERISA. 11 And to proceed to the instant motion, on June 16th, 12 2009, plaintiffs' counsel deposed Brian Warnock, who was a 13 vice president of the American Pension Corporation, an 14 independent third-party administrator, who was retained to 15 administer the functions of the plan. According to Criscito, 16 during Warnock's deposition, he admitted that APC possessed 17 brokerage account statements from early 2000, which had they 18 been reviewed, would have no later than October of 2001 19 revealed the discrepancies in the valuation of the plan's 20 assets, which would have prevented Criscito's alleged 21 fraudulent scheme, or, I quess, would have at least brought 22 it to light. And that is at admission on April 26, 2010, 23 Criscito filed this motion to implead APC, Mr. Warnock, and 24 Sandra Eck [phonetic], a pension consultant of APC, as 25 third-party defendants. Criscito seeks to assert common law

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claims for indemnification and contribution against the third-party defendants based on their negligence. Criscito alleges that Warnock and/or Eck had a duty to correct any inaccuracies and/or omissions concerning the valuation of the plan assets, based on the brokerage account statements in their possession; yet they failed to discover any alleged discrepancies between the true valuation of the alleged value- -- and the alleged valuation that Criscito had provided. As such, according to Criscito, the proposed third-party defendants negligently performed their duties "with respect to the administration of the plan." Thus, he claims that in the event that he is liable to the plaintiffs based on his actions while trustee of the plan, the third-party defendants are bound to indemnify Criscito and contribute to any judgment against him based on any lawsuits, costs, and as a result of third-party defendants' negligence. In support of this motion, Criscito submits that the motion is timely and that his third-party complaint will not cause any undue prejudice. Plaintiff opposes -- plaintiffs oppose the motion on several grounds that -- that the indemnification and contribution claims are preempted by ERISA and thus barred; that Criscito cannot state a claim for contribution or indemnification, his claims are barred by the applicable statute of limitations governing medical- -- malpractice

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1 claims. There is no basis under ERISA to sue non-fiduciaries, including the third-party defendants, and 2 admit that if APC was a fiduciary, Criscito could not assert 3 4 indemnification and contribution claims against a third-party 5 administrator Warnock or Eck. Rule 14(a) says that a party must serve a 6 7 third-party -- summons within 14 days after filing its answer or must seek leave from court to do so, and that's why this 9 instant motion is before us. 10 I'd like to begin by asking Mr. Kern a question. know there's a lot of issues here today. But it's -- it's 11 really a basic one that goes to futility, and that is whether 12 13 the proposed amended -- pleading states a claim for indemnification and contribution. And your brief did not 14 15 indicate nor has my research disclosed any cases where a claim for either contribution or indemnification can arise 16 17 where -- in favor of any tort-feasor who was -- who was 18 alleged to have intentionally caused the harm. All the cases talk about joint tort-feasors under negligence theories. 19 20 There's no cases out there where there is solely claims of intentional fraud and then indemnification and contribution 21 claims based on negligence. They don't exist. 22 23 And there's some -- there's some very strong language in the Restatement of Torts that says that is not 24 permitted. Because as I understand your claim, it's --25

1 plaintiffs' claim is that Dr. Criscito committed a fraud on us and stole our money, and your contribution and 3 indemnification claim is, well, the third-party administrators should have discovered my fraud, and therefore 5 they're liable to the plaintiffs too. 6 Is there any other way really to describe your 7 third-party complaint? MR. KERN: If, indeed -- and I think you're 8 9 correct, plaintiffs' claim is limited to one of fraud. 10 THE COURT: It is. MR. KERN: You're right. I think you raise an 11 12 interesting point and frankly one where that I'm not sure 13 that we've given much consideration to. But --14 THE COURT: Because -- because think about the 15 whole notion of contribution indemnification as principles. 16 Contribution -- indemnification says, I didn't do it, the 17 other person's primarily liable. And on the face of the 18 pleadings, that just cannot be, because the theory is you did 19 it intentionally, you went and you stole our money, so 20 there's no way on that intentional theory, you could --21 Criscito could say to the folks that didn't catch his 22 wrongdoing, you're primarily label. So I'm not sure how you 23 can even state a claim for indemnity. 24 But when we get to contribution, which is we're all

liable, we're all tort-feasors, the case when there's a

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1 four-party collision and everyone did something wrong on the highway and we bring in all the tort-feasors and -- on a 3 negligence theory. 4 I haven't seen any cases, and I've looked very, 5 very carefully for contribution theories where the -- in favor of the tort-feasor who -- who the only theory against 7 him is intentional harm. In fact, that's the third -- the second -- the restatement section of torts, says there's no 8 9 right of contribution in favor of any tort-feasor who has 10 intentionally caused the harm. That's been adopted by the 11 New Jersey courts. And I didn't see any law that's ever 12 recognized a contribution theory in this intentional 13 tort-feasor versus negligence context. 14 MR. KERN: It is an interesting question, 15 obviously. It's not one that was raised by the plaintiffs. 16 And frankly, I -- I can't tell that I've considered it at any 17 length. 18 But from what you're saying, Your Honor, I can't 19 tell you that you're wrong. And indeed, I -- it sounds like 20 you're most probably right, but honestly, it's not something I've addressed. 21 22 THE COURT: Let me ask you a question about 23 standing. I know that the plaintiffs have talked about 24 standing under ERISA based on fiduciary status. But there's 25 some more basic standing concepts out there that talk about

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that a plaintiff must have personally suffered some actual or
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    threatened injury as a result of defendant's alleged conduct.
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              So how does he have stand- -- when the theory is
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    you defrauded us, and his -- here's your theory against the
    other tort-feasor or the proposed tort-feasor is you should
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 6
    have let -- you should have -- you should have picked up my
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    wrongdoing earlier, how come he said that he has personally
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    suffered some injury as a result of their conduct?
              MR. KERN: I think, again, if we're limiting
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    this -- and you're right -- to a fraud base, then there is
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    none.
12
              THE COURT: Okay.
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              MR. KERN:
                        I think you're --
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              THE COURT: Anything else you want to add?
15
              MR. KERN: No, I -- you've stumped me, Your Honor.
    I think you're --
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17
              THE COURT: Okay.
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             Mr. Agnello, anything you want to add?
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              MR. AGNELLO: Mr. Charme is going to argue the
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   motion, Judge, but no, I don't think we have anything to add.
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             MR. CHARME: I really have nothing to add to what
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   Your Honor has said.
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              THE COURT: Okay. I'm -- I think you see where I'm
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   headed. And I just want the record to be clear. There's a
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    lot of issues were raised by the -- both parties. And I
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1 think there's four fundamental points that make this motion 2 both untimely, prejudicial, and futile under the proposed 3 pleading, and for that reason I'm denying the motion to -- to 4 amend -- for leave, rather, to file a third-party complaint. 5 And I want to go through my reasons. 6 The first issue is whether the third-party claims 7 are dependent on the outcome of the main claim. 8 Rule 14(a) -- third-party complaints under 14(a) can only be 9 asserted when the third party's liability is in some way 10 dependent on the outcome of the main claim or when the third 11 party is secondarily liable to the defendant. If the claim 12 is separate or independent, the pleading will be denied. 13 crucial characteristic of a Rule 14 third-party claim is that 14 the original defendant is attempting to transfer to the third-party defendant all or part of the liability asserted 15 16 against the original plaintiff. And that's from In re One 17 Meridian Plaza Fire Litigation, 820 F. Supp. 1492 (E.D. Pa. 18 1993). 19 Here, the essence of this case is Criscito's 20 alleged concealed breach of his fiduciary duties owed to the 21 plan. His indemnification and contribution claim against 22 APC, Warnock, and Eck are separate and independent from the 23 main fraud under ERISA. Specifically, the liability of APC, Warnock, and/or Eck as third-party defendants is not 24 25 derivative of Criscito's liability concerning his diversion

1 of the plan assets for his own benefit. Criscito 2 theoretically could file a separate professional and 3 malpractice action against them if a judgment is rendered 4 against him in this case. Thus, Criscito cannot maintain a 5 third-party action for contribution and indemnification against APC, Warnock, and Eck. 6 7 Although -- second, I want to talk about standing. 8 Although it was not raised precisely in this way by the 9 parties, the Court finds that Criscito lacks standing to file 10 a third-party complaint on his indemnification and 11 contribution claims. To have standing, a plaintiff must have 12 personally suffered some actual or threatened injury as a 13 result of defendant's unlawful conduct. That's the Gariano [phonetic] case at 845 F. Supp. 1074 (D.N.J. 1994). A 14 15 plaintiff must be asserting his own legal rights in the case, 16 not those of third parties. 17 Finally, a plaintiff's injuries must be within his 18 own -- as protected by the law from which the claim arises. 19 Here, plaintiffs have sued Criscito for his alleged 20 concealment of breach of fiduciaries owed to the plan. 21 successive fiduciaries under ERISA, plaintiff -- plaintiffs 22 seek on behalf of the plan and its participants and 23 beneficiaries, to recover assets that belong to the plan, its 24 participants and beneficiaries, and also seek relief 25 related -- related relief, such as punitive damages.

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In his proposed third-party complaint, Criscito claims that in the event he is liable for this wrong -- this intentional wrongdoing, based on his neg- -- based on his actions with respect to the plan, the third-party defendants are bound to indemnify him for any judgment rendered against him based upon any losses caused to him as a result of third-party defendants' negligence. The Court finds that Criscito failed to establish that his losses, if any, were the result of the alleged negligence or APC, Warnock or Eck. Although plaintiffs may have a viable claim against him for their alleged breach of duties as third-party administrator, any relief that plaintiff may seek against the third-party administrator would not appear to reflect plaintiffs' actions against Criscito based on his alleged fraudulent scheme to divert the plan's assets. Additionally, Criscito could not demonstrate that his interests are within -- in his of interests protected by the law from the -- from which his claims arise, the accused -- he was accused of undertaking a fraudulent scheme, while serving as the plan's trustee for his own financial gain. Such interest cannot be said to be protected by the law. I'm going to talk for a little bit about undue delay and timeliness. And I say that mindful that this is a

case that was filed in '08, over two years ago. Purpose of Rule 14(a) is to avoid security of action and multiplicity of litigation. That principle is well settled. However, joinder of third-party defendants under Rule 14 is not automatic. The decision to permit joinder rests with the sound discretion of the court. Courts have considered the following factors in exercising their discretion on whether to permit the filing of a third-party complaint: Timeliness,

A motion brought under 14(a) is not alleged under the same standards as a motion seeking leave to amend the pleadings under 15(a). And that requires a court to look at

probability of trial delay, potential for complication of

issues at trial, and prejudice to the original plaintiffs.

undue delay, bad faith and dilatory motive, repeated failure to cure deficiencies in the pleadings, and undue prejudice to

16 the opposing party by virtue of the allowance of the

17 amendment.

With respect to delay, the Third Circuit has said that the package of time without more does not require that a motion to amend be denied. However, at some point, the delay would become undue, placing an unwarranted burden on the Court, or it will become prejudicial, placing an unfair burden on the opposing party. The question of undue delay requires a focus on the plaintiffs' motives for not amending the complaint to assert the claim earlier.

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Additionally, whether the pleading would be futile, such as when the proposed claim provides an illegal basis for relief, a judge may properly deny a 14(a) motion. Here, the Court is satisfied that there was undue delay in bringing this motion here. Just -- based on the allegations in the complaint, in the third-party complaint, Criscito knew the crucial facts back in 2000. He knew who the third-party administrator was. He knew what their role So for him to say that I didn't learn it until -- that fact of the third-party administrate's role until the deposition this year, completely ignores the history of the course of dealings between the parties as plan fiduciaries and as third-party administrators. Therefore, as early as 2000, Criscito had to have been aware their potential obliviousness to the valuation inaccuracies but waited 10 years, two years into this case after discovery's been ongoing, depositions have been taken, to bring this -- to bring this third-party complaint. Criscito cannot and has not sufficiently explained his delay and failure to take advantage of previous opportunities to implead these third-party defendants, and therefore, the Court finds there's been undue delay. Finally, I want to talk about futility, and I want us to begin with what we talked about earlier during oral

argument, which is indemnification. Indemnification is an

1 equitable doctrine that allows the court to shift the costs 2 from tort-feasor to another. That's well settled in the 3 Johns-Manville case, 116 N.J. 504 (N.J. 1989). One branch of 4 common law indemnity shifts the liability from one who is 5 constructively or vicariously liable to the tort-feasor who 6 is primarily liable. A corollary to this principle is that 7 one who is primarily at fault may not obtain indem -indemnity from another tort-feasor. 8 9 Accepting Criscito's allegations as true, he is 10 primarily liable to plaintiffs based on intentional 11 wrongdoing, and thus, may not seek indemnity from APC, 12 Warnock, and Eck for indemnity, and therefore the indemnity 13 claims fail as a matter of law. 14 I reach a similar conclusion with respect to 15 contribution, and I rely on the Second Restatement of Torts, 16 § 886(a)(1), which talks about contribution, and it says, 17 first that when two or more persons become liable in tort to 18 the same person for the same harm, there's a right of 19 contribution among them, even though judgment has not been 20 rendered against or all of them, but that there is "no right 21 of contribution in favor any tort-feasor who has intentionally caused the harm." 22 23 Here, plaintiffs' ERISA action is based on 24 Criscito's fraud, while Criscito's third-party claims are 25 based upon negligence.

1 As Criscito is alleged to have intentionally caused 2 harm to plaintiffs, he cannot maintain a cause of action for 3 common-law contribution against APC, Warnock, or Eck. 4 hold otherwise, would be aiding Criscito, who has been 5 alleged to have deliberately done harm to plaintiffs. is not a situation where Criscito is alleged to have acted 6 7 negligently and he is an equal tort-feasor with the 8 third-party defendants. As such, he fails to state a claim 9 for common-law contribution. 10 So for those reasons, the Court finds that Criscito 11 cannot maintain a third-party complaint for indemnification 12 or contribution, and his motion for leave to file third-party 13 complaint is denied. And I will sign an order to that effect 14 today. I believe one had been submitted. 15 Okay. Why don't we talk a little bit about 16 discovery and where we are with respect to discovery in this 17 case. 18 MR. CHARME: Discovery is done, Your Honor, because 19 as a matter of fact, what I would like to do is have the 20 Court set a pretrial conference date and then start getting the pretrial order done, if it would be acceptable to 21 22 Your Honor. 23 THE COURT: Let me stop and ask you two questions, 24 Mr. Charme. One is: Will there be any summary judgment 25 motions?

1 MR. CHARME: That leads to a different point I was going to make. I received an ex- -- a four-page expert 2 3 report from Mr. Kern via email on Friday. The report is 4 missing some of the prerequisites of Rule 26, such as --THE COURT: Let me stop you further. Are you --5 have you submitted any expert reports? 6 7 MR. CHARME: Yes, I did. 8 THE COURT: Okay. 9 MR. CHARME: That was done on April 15th. THE COURT: Okay. And when was his -- when were 10 his due? 11 12 MR. CHARME: His was due Friday. 13 THE COURT: And he sent you a report. 14 MR. CHARME: He sent me a report. But it's 15 incomplete in terms of complying with Rule 26. 16 THE COURT: Okay. Have you had a meet-and-confer 17 with him to see if he can give you the editions? 18 MR. CHARME: Well, I sent the let- -- I sent him a 19 letter this morning. 20 THE COURT: Okay. 21 MR. CHARME: I don't anticipate there is going to 22 be an issue on that. The only thing is, Your Honor, you 23 provided that each side had 20 days from receipt of a report 24 to --

THE COURT: You can have more time to take the

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1 depositions, if you need them. 2 MR. CHARME: Okav. 3 THE COURT: Not a problem. 4 Are you going to be filing any summary judgment 5 motions? MR. CHARME: I'm not sure. 6 7 THE COURT: Well, I need to know because, if not, I'll give you -- it's a case that's assigned to Judge Brown 8 9 in Trenton. He will promptly give you a trial date, if there's no motions pending. If there are motions pending, 10 11 he'll hear the motions first. So you're at the end of 12 discovery. You have everything in. Have you made a -- it 13 doesn't -- it sounds like it would be tough to prevail on 14 summary judgment on a fraud case. 15 MR. CHARME: Yes, that's -- that's correct, 16 Your Honor. So I don't believe we'll be making a motion. 17 THE COURT: Okay. And what about any further 18 settlement discussions? Are they realistic? Do you want to 19 come in for another conference? Do you want to -- I can give 20 a date for a final pretrial conference, not a problem. 21 MR. CHARME: Your Honor, if I might just tell you 22 where we are. 23 THE COURT: Okay. Good. Do you want to go off the record, since we're talking about settlement? 24 25 MR. CHARME: Yeah, go off the record.

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              THE COURT: Okay.
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                        (Pause in proceedings)
 3
              THE COURT: -- five days before the pretrial
 4
    conference. Tell me when you want to get ready for the
 5
    pretrial. Do you want to do it in August? Do you want to do
    it in September? You tell me.
 6
 7
              MR. CHARME: As I understand the --
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              THE COURT: I'll give it to you next week if you --
 9
    I mean, I'll do it as quickly as you want it.
10
              MR. CHARME: Well, Your Honor, I have the last
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   pretrial order that you signed, and it says that 10 days
12
   before the pretrial conference, you want the final pretrial
13
    order and all of the other stuff.
14
              THE COURT: Right. But I'll do it -- you know what
15
    I'd like to do is I can assure you that I can give you a
16
   prompt trial with Judge Brown. So I want to have that
17
   pretrial order in before 10 days. I'm not sure what the
18
    trial date's going to be. But you tell me how quickly you
19
    can -- you can work together to get a final pretrial order
20
    done. If you want July, August, September, I'm flexible.
21
             MR. CHARME: Okay. We'd like -- how about if we
22
    submit the pretrial order by September 30?
23
              THE COURT: Could we do a little bit earlier in
24
   September because, you know, he may be ask- -- why don't we
25
    try to do it like mid-September?
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              MR. CHARME:
                           That's fine.
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              THE COURT: Is that okay? Okay. That gives you
 3
    the summer to take the two depositions, if you want to take
    them, and to get the -- is anyone observant of the Jewish
 5
    holidays?
 6
              MR. CHARME: Yes.
 7
              THE COURT: Okay. So let me see where they are.
 8
    Do you have your calendar? Do you know when they are?
 9
    can you help me out? Okay. It's early in September.
10
    Yom Kippur's on a weekend. I have a trial the week of
11
    September 20th. So I can do it -- is it too soon to do it
12
    the week of the 13th?
13
              MR. KERN: Your Honor, I am on trial most of
14
    September and October.
15
              THE COURT: You have to find a day to come in
    because Judge Brown will have you come in on a Saturday.
16
17
             MR. KERN: Okay.
18
              THE COURT: Or a Friday night or something.
19
    tell me, you -- I'll work with you, but you can't just say
20
    I'm out of the box in September and October. I can move it
    till August, but that'll probably be more burdensome. I'm
21
22
    trying to work with you.
23
             MR. KERN: You want dates now? If you give me two
24
   minutes, I --
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             THE COURT: Sure.
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             MR. KERN:
                         I'm -- at trial on September 23, -4, -8
 2
    and 30, and then October 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, and 22.
 3
              THE COURT: Why don't we do Friday, September 17th?
 4
    The 17th is the holiday, so we'll do it in the morning at
 5
    10 o'clock? What holiday is that? That's the eve of Yom
 6
    Kippur. It doesn't start till that evening. Is that going
 7
    to be a problem?
 8
             MR. CHARME:
                           No.
 9
              THE COURT: Okay. Good. So we'll do it early and
    get you out of here early. So why don't we say
10
11
    September 17th at 10 a.m. and get me the pretrial the day
12
    before, okay? And come with your calendar so we can talk
13
    about a trial with Judge Brown. I'll see when he's
14
    available.
15
             How long do you think the trial will be?
16
             MR. CHARME: Maybe a week.
17
              THE COURT: Okay. I will send a form -- a final
18
   pretrial order order, and I will give you a copy of Judge --
19
    the sample for Judge Brown's, okay?
20
             MR. KERN: Judge, before we do that, I think there
21
   may be a summary judgment motion --
22
              THE COURT: You can file it at any time. Judge
23
   Brown has no rules, but I'm not going to adjourn the final
24
   pretrial.
25
             MR. KERN: Okay.
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              THE COURT: Okay. So September 17th at 10 -- the
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    defendant's going to move for summary judgment?
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              MR. KERN: Yup.
              THE COURT: Okay. All right. September 17th at
 4
 5
    10 o'clock. Good luck, everyone. I will see you then.
 6
              MR. CHARME: Thank you, Judge.
 7
              MR. AGNELLO: Thank you, Judge.
              (Conclusion of proceedings at 12:50 p.m.)
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1 Certification 2 I, SARA L. KERN, Transcriptionist, do hereby certify 3 that the 22 pages contained herein constitute a full, true, and accurate transcript from the official electronic 4 5 recording of the proceedings had in the above-entitled 6 matter; that research was performed on the spelling of proper 7 names and utilizing the information provided, but that in 8 many cases the spellings were educated quesses; that the 9 transcript was prepared by me or under my direction and was 10 done to the best of my skill and ability. 11 I further certify that I am in no way related to any of 12 the parties hereto nor am I in any way interested in the 13 outcome hereof. 14 15 16 17 s/ Sara L. Kern 18 July 6, 2010 19 Signature of Approved Transcriber Date 20 21 Sara L. Kern, CET**D-338 King Transcription Services 22 65 Willowbrook Boulevard 23 Wayne, NJ 07470 (973) 237-6080 24 25